

SAW
Buttery Mill
Silvermine, Connecticut

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District Of Connecticut

Historic American Buildings Survey
Harold H. Davis, District Officer
29 Whitney Ave., New Haven, Conn.

BUTTERY MILL

Silvermine, Fairfield County, Conn.

Owner: Fred W. Buttery

Date of Erection: 1741 (Originally built in 1688)

Architect or Builder: James Brown

Present Condition: Good.

Number of Stories: One story

Materials of Construction: Wood shingle roof
Brick chimney
Vertical board siding
Stone foundation
Plank floors

Other Existing Records: Article in Conn. Circle - July
1938, entitled "Buttery's Mill."

List of Photographs:

1. West Elevation (Front)
2. North East Elevation
3. Water Wheel
4. Doweled "Dutchman"

BUTTERY MILL
SILVERMINE, CONNECTICUT

The old saw mill known as Buttery's Mill of Silvermine Brook of Norwalk, is reputed to be the oldest mill in the United States. It is not the original mill, which stood one quarter of a mile further inland on the same stream. The original was destroyed by fire and the present one was erected at its present site in 1741 by Jacob St. John, son of Ebenezer St. John of Norwalk. In 1759 St. John started ealling by the sale of one quartsr interest to Thomas Fairweather, and continued the selling and transferring of shares to the respective holders until the very unusual situation arose. The method of the holding of the shares was known as the 24th. In other words, each share holder was allowed to operate the mill one day out of each 24 in the month, for his own personal benefit. Although there wers numerous dealings in the disposition and transfer of shares, this plan worked with the utmost success. Some of the family names known to have been connected with the mill are Hoyts, St. Johns, Platts, Gilberts, Benedicts, Abbots, Ritohes and numerous other prominent names of New Canaan. The mill was purchased by John W. Buttery in 1866 and in 1909 it became the property of his son, Mr. Fred Buttery, who is the present owner.

The interesting part to us ie that at the first mention of the word mill, we think first of steel, cotton, iron or similar materials. The mill known as Buttery's Mill is a fine example of the oldsr type mill used for the sawing of timbers. The old mill, which probably cut most of the wood for the early homes of this community, had water power connected to the machinery of the mill by the unique over shot paddle wheel, and is still the means by which the mill operates. An axillary in the form of a turbine has been constructed in the present mill. Huge logs, still taken from nearby woodlots, are rolled down into the yard of the mill and from there picked up by a crane of Yankse ingenuity and placed on the carriage of the circular saw.

The present owner is very proud of the mill's record, both historical and as a reliable place of business. Visitors are pleasantly shown about the mill, and are informed of the old and newer machinery, the wooden gears, the sluice gate which controls the speed of the ovrsshot wheel, and the novel crane and the other interesting features of this historic old mill.

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BUTTERY MILL
SILVERMINE, CONNECTICUT

Source of Information: Conversation with Mr. Fred Buttery.
Article in Conn. Circle - July 1938,
entitled "Buttery's Mill."

Author:

John F. Flanagan

Approved:

Harold H. Davis Feb. 27-1939